

SPiRiT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals Upon Current Topics—Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

THE ALABAMA CLAIMS.

From the N. Y. Tribune. The great question of our demands upon England growing out of a war carried on from her ports in the interests of Southern slavery and her own mercantile supremacy, is revived in a chapter from the State Department. It is a long one, but it is as spirited as it is important, and upon the whole well worth attentive reading. Those who have denounced our high-minded Secretary as the slave of Spanish influences, the betrayer of American principles, and the destroyer of Cuba, might read his correspondence with profit. They might then be enabled to suggest to themselves why our Government has not interpreted the law of 1818 into a justification of the premature recognition of the Southern Confederacy, and why it prefers not to risk the commission of such acts as might tend to destroy the morality of the complaint we have so justly, so earnestly, so feelingly made against the consummate wrong inflicted upon us by England. But apart from any such consideration as this, Secretary Fish holds, we doubt not, that the course of straightforward duty is in the long run the best helper of men and nations, and that as England's premature and sinister aid only brought prolonged ruin on the South, so anything less than square dealing with the Cuban question will only protract the pains of those whom we desire to be able to rescue.

Both in his Cuban and English correspondence Mr. Fish has shown a steady ability which the admirers of serpentine and sanguinary statesmanship will have occasion to acknowledge. No point in the case of our claims has been omitted by him; and every argument gained strength by the firm and graceful manner in which he presents it. While demonstrating that the judgment of Congress and the people as to the Johnson-Clarendon treaty has been almost unanimous, yet he takes pains to show, by reference to an historical precedent, that the rejection of the treaty by the Senate was as natural as it was legal and rightful, and was not to be regarded as a discourtesy. Reopening the general question of the claims, the Secretary reiterates our right in 1871 to expect "the earnest good will, sympathy, and moral support of Great Britain." Then comes our standard array of facts, reinforced with admirable statement and clear logic. The determination of the English Government on the 6th of May to recognize the South, four days prior to the arrival in London of any official knowledge of the President's proclamation of April 17, 1861, is of course dwelt upon gravely. It is by reference to this proclamation that the Queen's proclamation of belligerency has been defended, but the defense falls to the ground when it is considered that the purpose of recognizing the South was expressly declared before it had any proclamation of ours to justify it. At the time of recognition there was no such thing as "a population elevated into a force by the prosecution of war, which, as Mr. Canning points out, is the test of belligerent condition." There was no fact of pre-existing quarrel or misunderstanding to justify this wholesale injury. Belligerency, so far as the Rebels maintained it, proceeded—argues the Secretary—from the ports of Great Britain and her provinces. This and more, he remarks, on the precipitancy of the Queen's declaration, and Mr. Bright's character—both which concession of belligerency, we are made to understand, the President regards as a part of our case only so far as it shows the beginning and animus of a course of conduct.

We have neither time nor space to pursue fully an argument which takes up so many of our columns. But we cannot forbear to commend again the statements that "Great Britain to the end continued to be the arsenal, the navy yard, and the treasury of the insurgents," and that whereas we lost more than a million of tons shipping by the war waged by Anglo-Rebels, Great Britain increased her shipping correspondingly by 1,120,000 tons. Approaching the direct question of the claims, our State Department complains that month after month the Queen's Courts consumed in quibbling over statutory technicalities, which Parliament might have settled in a moment by an act. "Learned counsel gave sanction to artful devices of deceit," and the English Government excused itself by alleged defects of law and municipal regulations. Why not have repaired the law? Why not have taken the risk of doing damage to two individuals like Laird and Prieoleau instead of wreaking desolation upon a great and friendly nation? We need not pursue the narrative of these claims, still deeply interesting to every American, still insisted upon with the constancy we owe to principle even more than to outraged feeling. What Mr. Cobden said Mr. Fish now most opportunely recalls—"You have been carrying on war against the United States from these shores and have been inflicting damage greater than would have been produced by many ordinary wars." Let it be understood, finally, that our State Department lays down the principle that no sovereign power can fairly plead defect of its domestic penal statutes to justify or attenuate an international wrong, or, in other words, that municipal regulations do not constitute the measure of a nation's responsibilities.

WOULD SPAIN MAKE WAR ON US?

From the N. Y. Sun. Among the arguments put forth by the Spanish agents and advocates among us, paid and unpaid—in the State Department and out of it—to deter the American people from doing their duty to Cuba, is the danger of a war with Spain. This has been especially dwelt upon by the Spanish journal El Cronista in this city. That paper has exhibited to us the Spanish navy, iron-clads and all, coming up the Bay of New York, under a full head of steam, and taking this metropolitan capital, or putting it to a ransom of two or three hundred millions of dollars. Other advocates of Spanish tyranny point for us the destruction of what commerce still remains to us on the ocean. Mr. Sumner, we believe, has drawn such a picture—with the consequent bankruptcy of our shipping merchants. So basely do these friends of European despotism and of slavery think of the American nation, that they fancy such appeals to mere material interest can smother in our hearts the inspiration of every moral idea, the prompting of every generous and manly instinct.

There is no danger of a war with Spain. She has not the means to make war. It is likely that the bankrupt Government which has not been able to conquer the unarmed and undisciplined patriots of Cuba will attempt in addition to conquer the United States? Those unprincipled debauchees, Prim and Serrano, who now hold Spain in

their clutch, would not dare to allow the signal for a contest which would first of all overthrow their own usurped authority. It is true that there is a war party in Spain, but it is the party who seek to get rid of Prim and Serrano in order to enjoy the public plunder themselves. This party is looking to Caballero de Rodas, Captain-General at Havana, for its leader. He is desirous of getting back to Spain to enjoy his chances, and is constantly telegraphing to Madrid that the Cuban revolt is finished, in the hope that he may be ordered home again. He is for war with the United States, and we happen to know that he has repeatedly written to his private friends in Madrid in favor of such a war, on the ground that they could make a great deal of money by selling letters of marque to operate against American commerce. But De Rodas and his friends are not likely to gain their ends; Prim is too smart for them; and there will be no war even if we should go so far as to recognize the independence of the Cuban Republic.

However, in the case of a war, should we be likely to suffer a defeat? That is the first question to be answered; and we should like to see Mr. Fish, or Mr. Sumner, or Mr. Sidney Webster, or any other advocate of Spanish rule in America, stand up before an American audience and say that we should be defeated. Next, would it be a long or a costly war? By no means. If 40,000 Cubans can defy the whole power of Spain, and gain ground daily in their war for the possession of that island, how would it be for an American fleet were to be sent down there to open their ports and an American volunteer force of 10,000 or 20,000 men to be added to their fighting ability? Would not Spain finally and irredeemably lose both Cuba and Porto Rico within a month from the beginning of the war? Do Mr. Fish and Mr. Sumner entertain any doubt on that point? And would not fifty or a hundred millions of dollars spent in helping the republicans of these islands to independence be a first-rate investment? Mr. Sumner displayed a great genius for statistics in demonstrating that Alaska was worth seven millions. What would the value of the Spanish West Indies be by his arithmetic?

But it would not be principally in the West Indies that we should strike at Spain. That is a good point, but not vital enough for a short, sharp, and decisive war. We need a naval station in the Mediterranean, and such a war would give us an opportunity to acquire one. The Balearic Islands lie fairly out in that sea—Majorca, Minorca, Ivica, and two little islets—and they would just suit our purposes. Their trade is considerable, their people are docile and well suited to enjoy republican institutions of the American pattern; we could take those islands easily, and hold them with advantage. That is where we should aim in the event of a war. Admiral Farragut, himself descended from a family of Minorca, would go out with a fleet and a small army and capture the group of islands. Not only would they be of use to us as a naval station, but their vicinity to the Suez Canal would give them great importance as a depot for American commerce with the East. The conquest would not be difficult, and it would more than repay the whole cost of the war.

But we repeat it, there is no probability of such an event. If we should recognize the independence of Cuba, it would not lead to any hostilities with Spain. We may act towards that young republic the part which our principles and our position require, without putting ourselves under any necessity of acquiring the Balearic Islands by conquest, or of annexing the Spanish Antilles as prizes of war.

EDUCATION FOR THE FREEDMEN.

From the N. Y. Times. There are no charities—save, perhaps, an occasional "charity" which so successfully appeal to popular good-will and support, as those that pay the largest possible percentage of receipts to beneficiaries, and the smallest possible percentage to agents. Let a charitable institution possess this one merit—the direct distribution of its gifts to the greatest number of persons by the simplest machinery—and it at once appeals to generosity on the one hand and to our approval of business skill and economical management on the other.

The exhibit recently made by General Howard regarding the educational work of the Freedmen's Bureau disclosed a charity of the sort just spoken of. It is surprising how many people, white and black, at the South, have been taught, through the Bureau's instrumentality, during the past year, and by how few Government agents the work has been done. The number of the persons to whom the Bureau has directly or indirectly furnished education in this way amounts to more than a hundred thousand; and yet the whole work has been accomplished without a dollar of new expense, the sum used being a part of the savings of old appropriations.

General Cox, however, in his report as Secretary of the Interior, makes a new and important suggestion relative to a still further consolidation and economy in the work of education. It is well known that at the last session of Congress the organization of the Department of Education was essentially reduced. The Commissioner has accordingly devoted his time to giving advice, information and aid to State officers or trustees or instructors of common schools, to preparing and transmitting circulars and memoirs on education, and to personally visiting schools and education conventions for the interchange of views. But General Cox observes that the encouragement of education among the freedmen, which has hitherto devolved on their Bureau, is really closely allied to the general scope of the studies devolving upon the Commissioner of Education. Accordingly, he suggests the propriety of uniting the whole in the latter office, with suitable powers and provisions for fostering education and increasing intelligence among the freedmen. The suggestion seems to be a very good one. The Department of Education should naturally succeed to the educational part of the Freedmen's Bureau, the latter institution having now been substantially abolished.

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